

LATINX

A brief handbook

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for the

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Introduction

The objective of this guide is to provide a historical context of the term “Latinx,” clarify common misconceptions of the term, and create space for an adaptive usage of Latinx that both respects non binary individuals and takes into consideration broader community concerns. Since its ambiguous inception, the term Latinx has brought about conversations around identity formation bridging across age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender, and this guide seeks to honor that history. This is important to LGBT* organizations and the LGBTQIA community because LGBT* Latinx are marginalized at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and Latinidad. To be LGBT* and Latinx is to struggle to be your full self within multiple communities. Understanding the complexity of gender inclusive terminology for gender nonconforming and transgender Latinxs provides solidarity and active allyship.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The term “Latinx” gained popularity after the fall of “Latin@*.” Google Trend data shows that the term appeared in 2004 but died down in popularity shortly afterward, before gaining popularity again in 2014. Latinx is currently experiencing a spike in popularity since November 2015. The term was initially seen more on AfrxLatinx- and indigenous-centered social media outlets. Latinx is not synonymous to “queer” and is not used by all transgender individuals. Do not assume all transgender folks will use the ‘x’. Additionally, the term is used primarily in the United States by college students, academics, and social media users; there is a varied use in Latin America.

***The term “Latin@” lost popularity for two main reasons: (1) seen as exclusive because the ‘o’ was still dominating the ‘a’ and (2) technical issues on social media since @ was used to tag others.**

What's the difference?

HISPANIC

*

LATINO

*

LATIN

*

SPANISH

“Hispanic” refers to individuals of Spanish-speaking origin and “Latino” refers to individuals of Latin American origin or ancestry. “Hispanic” includes people from Spain and excludes non-Spanish speaking individuals while “Latino” includes non-Spanish speaking individuals of Latin American origin or descent while excluding people from Spain. Both terms are used to refer to individuals residing in the United States. The term “Latin” is derived from “Latin America” and is reminiscent of Romance languages based in the Latin language, while “Spanish” refers to individuals from Spain and is preferred by some in place of Latino. However, these are not all-encompassing identities. Preference for identity labels depends on geographic and personal situation. An individual’s identity can range from “Hispanic” to “Latino” to “Chicanx” to “Xicanx” to national origin (i.e. Salvadoran, Chilean, Dominican) or may not be attributed to national identity.

**GOT
ALLYSHIP?**

**GOT
SOLIDARITY?**

TRANSGENDER

A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. "Trans" is shorthand for "transgender." (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun, thus "transgender people" is appropriate but "transgenders" and "transgender" are both viewed as disrespectful.)

GENDER NON-CONFORMING

A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

GENDERQUEER

A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female.

GENDER IDENTITY

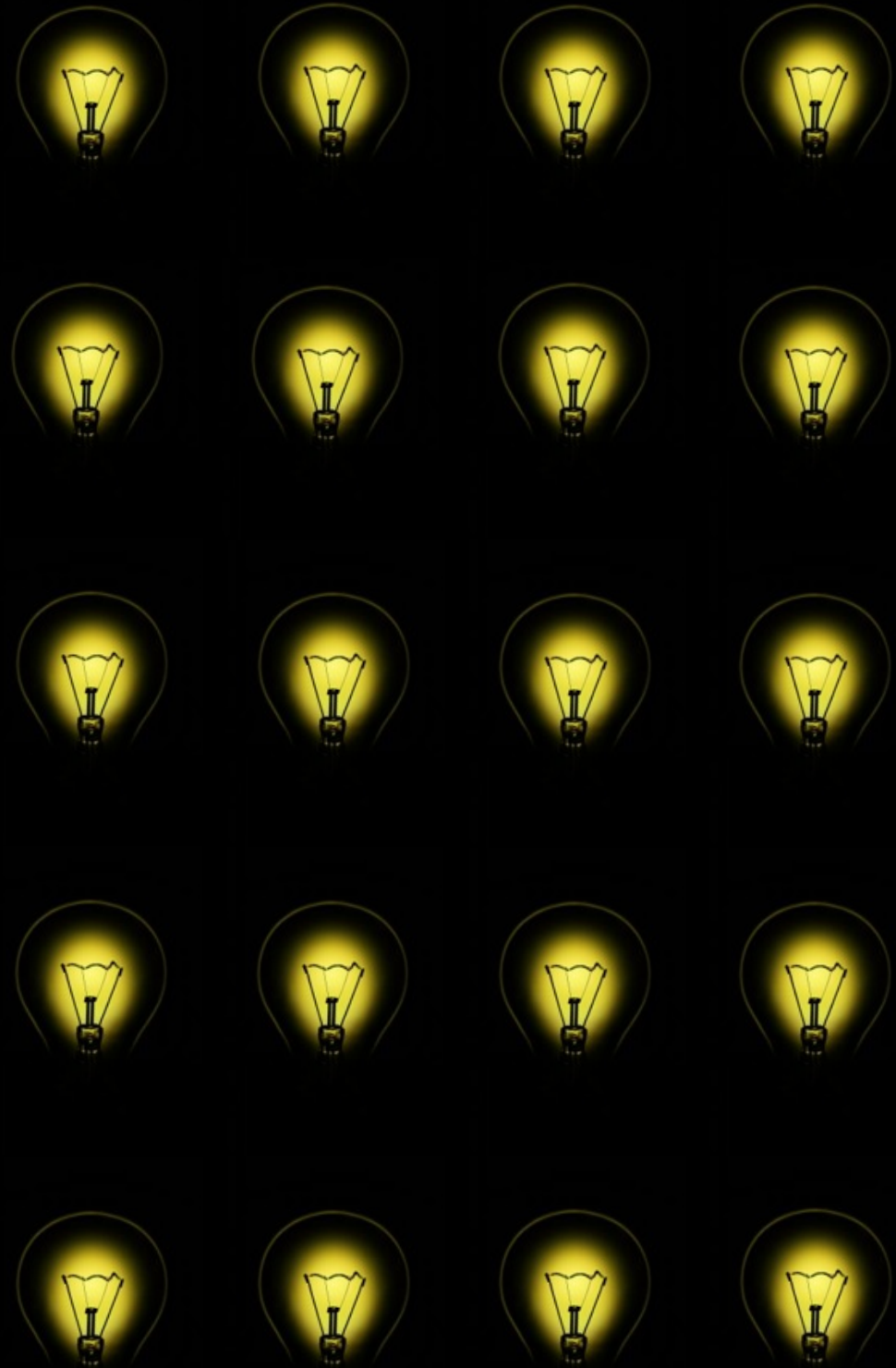
An individual's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

GENDER EXPRESSION

How a person represents or expresses one's gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

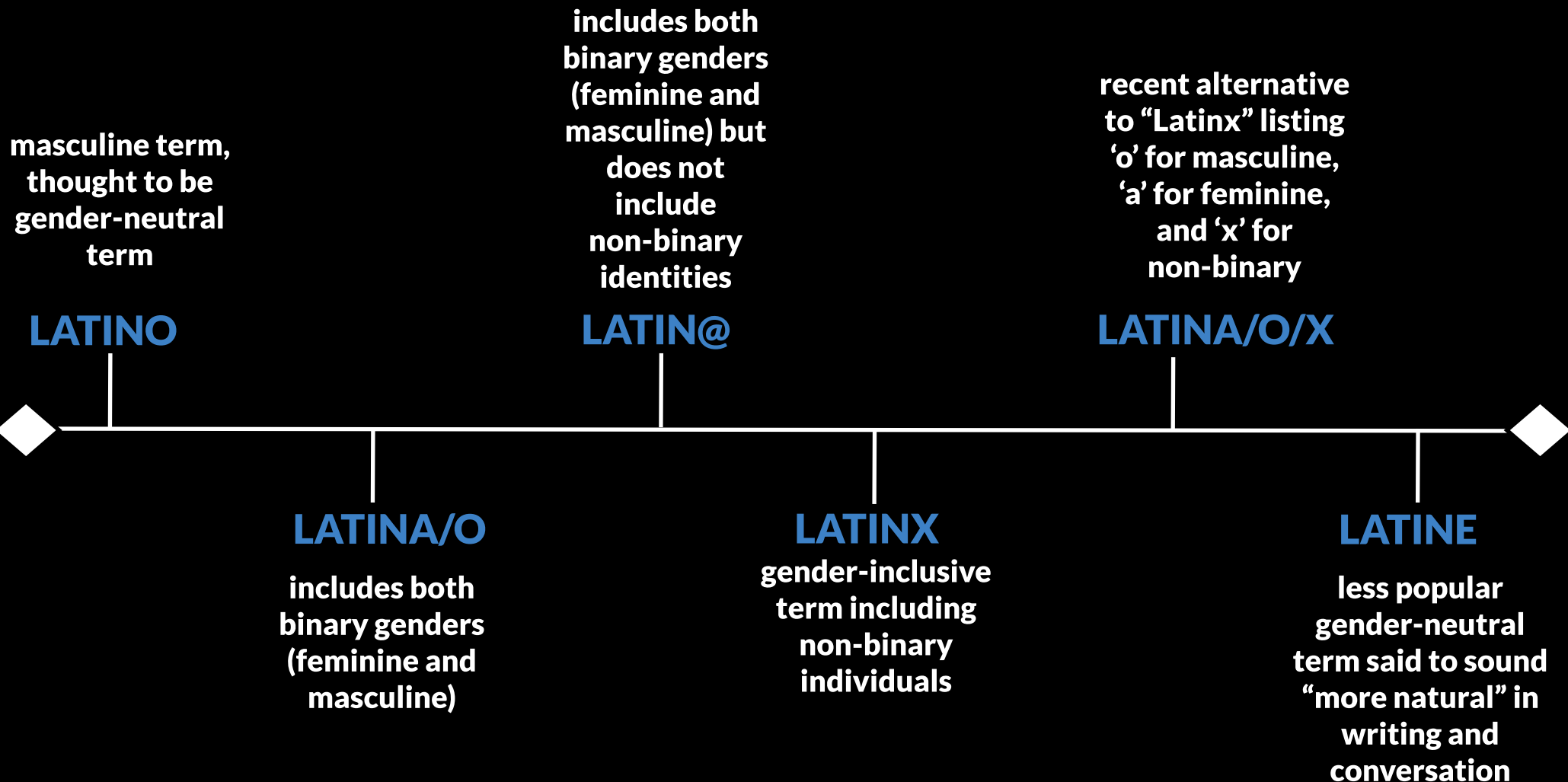
BACKGROUND DEFINITIONS

*Definitions ADAPTED from [National Center for Transgender Equality](#)



POPULAR TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

THIS IS A TIME LINE OF POPULAR
TERMS WITHIN THE LATINX
COMMUNITY IN CHRONOLOGICAL
ORDER* .



* THERE ARE NO RECORDS LISTING EXACT DATES OF ORIGIN.

WHY DOES LANGUAGE MATTER?

In Spanish and Portuguese, the masculine gender is treated as a default in descriptions concerning mixed-gender situations.

For example, if a male walks into a room full of women or non-binary individuals, the written or spoken term carries an 'o' (i.e Latino, niños, compañeros).

“Latino,” however, is not a gender-inclusive or gender-neutral term; to default to the masculine gender promotes interpersonal violence against women and non-binary individuals.

TO LATINX
OR TO NOT
LATINX?

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How do I know what to call someone?

When in doubt, ASK! While popular terminology plays a role in identity formation and our understanding of the world, the only way to know what to “call” someone or how to respect an individual’s identity is to ask.

Why not “Latin” instead?

While “Latin” does provide a gender-neutral option, “Latinx” purposefully puts gender at the forefront by adopting ‘x’ as its gendered aspect. In others words, “Latinx” is seen as a more active gender-inclusive term.

How does de-gendering language solve anything?

As explained in the prior response, “Latinx” does not “degender” language. Instead, “Latinx” includes a greater range of gender identity in the conversation.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Isn't "Latinx" a U.S. imperialistic imposition on the Spanish language? Shouldn't we be aiming for a decolonization of Latinidad?

The blanket statement that "Latinx" is a U.S. imperialistic and colonial influence is itself a binary dynamic, implying that language must always be either an oppressor OR liberator. Let's back up a couple of centuries for a bit. Spanish is a colonial language with a violent history of erasing native and African languages throughout Latin America and beyond. The controversy over the term "Latinx" grounded in an erasure of Spanish assumes a fragile dependence on the Spanish language to unify the Latinx population. Latinxs speak English, Portuguese, Quechua, Mapuche, Tzotzil, and many other languages. Additionally, "Latino" as an identificatory term preferences mestizx Latinxs while shadowing AfrxLatinx and indigenous experiences. Adopting a gender-inclusive term such as "Latinx" disrupts the colonial omniscient force of Spanish and the perceived homogeneity of the Latinx population.

LATI-WHAT?

LATINX

LATINE

LATINA

LATINO

LATINA/O

LATIN@

LATINA/O/X

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How do you even say all these gender-inclusive terms?

Latinx (la-teen-ex)

Latin@ (la-teen-at or la-teen-ow)

Latina/o/x (la-teen-ows)

Latine (la-teen-eh)

Okay, but one letter doesn't address the larger institutional faults against non-binary individuals, so shouldn't we be focusing on more important changes instead? Anyway, non-binary folks are just a small subset of the Latinx population. Why care?

Yes a change in spelling does not solve wider institutional structures that inherently discriminate against non-binary individuals, but a change does not need to be an all-encompassing solution to be adopted. While "Latinx" may not be the permanent solution to gender-inclusive language concerning Latinidad, to prolong the exclusivity of non-binary individuals while a "better" solution is created puts cis comfort before the respect of non-binary identity.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS



But I've never heard anyone use the term Latinx, does it really exist?

In fact, the term Latinx is being used contemporarily across Latin American countries as well as the United States. Try searching “lxs + (country)” on Google (ex. Lxs cuba, lxs puerto rico, etc). You will find that the term appears across international advertisements, Facebook groups, Youtube videos, Tumblr blogs, etc. It’s likely only a matter of time before you come across the term in media or in your local community.

How do you use the 'x' in writing?

The ‘x’ replaces gendered words in reference to individuals. For example, “Los niños están en el cuarto” becomes “Lxs niños están en el cuarto.” Alternatively, you can use an ‘e’ to denote gender-inclusivity. For example, “Les niños están en el cuarto.” You use “Latinx” when referring to a group of mixed-gendered individuals and non-binary individual(s). Single gendered groups are referred to as Latino or Latina.

and now you know . . .

LATINX

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